



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton
National Park

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

RANGERS RESCUE CLIMBERS CAUGHT IN SNOW STORM ON THE GRAND TETON

Grand Teton National Park rangers rescued a seriously injured climber, 47-year-old Joe Hestick of Bridgeport, West Virginia, on Sunday night, August 31. Utilizing the helicopter short-haul rescue method, Hestick was flown from an elevation of 12,100 feet near the Eye of the Needle on the Grand Teton with only minutes to spare before the helicopter was grounded for the night. Exum Mountain Guide Jim Williams called park dispatch at 6:55 p.m. from the Lower Saddle via cell phone, notifying rangers that he was hearing cries for help from climbers somewhere on the Grand Teton. With daylight fading, rangers immediately requested that the park's contract helicopter fly to Lupine Meadows to pick up park rangers and rescue gear, and on to the Lower Saddle to expedite the rescue.

Hestick and his wife Beth, 48 years old, began a climbing trip on Monday, August 25, and planned to summit the Grand Teton via the Upper Exum Ridge on Friday, August 29. A moisture-laden storm settled in on the Tetons on Friday leaving two feet of snow on the summit of the Grand Teton. The Hesticks were high on the route when the storm intensified and due to limited visibility, they were not able to find a descent route. They found a dry cave near the summit of the Grand Teton where they stayed for two nights in cold, snowy weather. As clouds lifted and conditions improved on Sunday, August 31, the Hesticks were attempting to make their way down the mountain when Joe fell approximately 50 feet and sustained serious injuries.

After making the initial cell phone call on Sunday, Williams climbed to reach the Hesticks. Williams conducted a patient assessment, provided emergency medical care and kept rangers informed of Hesticks' condition until the helicopter rescue team arrived. With the aid of the park's contract helicopter, ranger Marty Vidak was inserted by the short-haul method to the accident scene at approximately 8:00 p.m. and assisted Williams with placing Hestick into a short-haul evacuation suit. With Vidak attending the patient, the two were flown from the 12,100-foot elevation to the Lupine Meadows' rescue cache, landing at 8:30 p.m. Hestick was then transported by park ambulance to St. John's Medical Center in Jackson.


Exum Guide Williams assisted Beth to the Lower Saddle and provided her with warm fluids; she then spent the night in her tent. Because Beth was dehydrated and experiencing swollen feet after the two days of inclement weather, rangers decided to fly her out by helicopter on Monday morning, September 1. Park ranger Brandon Torres, who served as the incident commander, remarked, "The Hesticks did a remarkably good job of surviving the extended stormy weather on the mountain."

In addition to the Hesticks, another climbing party of six was caught in Friday's storm on the Grand. Park rangers staying at the Lower Saddle hut heard shouts from a descending party at 9:00 p.m. After being on the move for 15 hours on the Owen-Spalding route, several members of the group were wet and cold. When asked if they needed help, the group leader replied that they needed warm fluids. The climbers were brought into the hut, given soup and provided warm, dry clothing. A 16-year-old male, who was

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wearing cut-off jeans under his soaked rain pants, felt he could not continue to their camp in the Moraines. He stayed overnight with the rangers in the hut, while the other members of the party were escorted by rangers to their camp below.

Furthermore, two climbers on the Buckingham Ridge of the Middle Teton spent an unexpected overnight in Friday's storm. They contacted park rangers on Saturday, requesting examination of frost bitten toes.

Park rangers remind backcountry users that weather conditions during late summer and early fall can turn winter-like in the higher elevations. Users should always check weather forecasts and be prepared for the unexpected by carrying essential survival equipment - including extra warm clothing, water and food - in the event that an emergency requires spending more time than originally planned in the outdoors. Cell phones may also be useful in the event of an emergency situation that the party cannot otherwise handle on their own.

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